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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 KHARTOUM 000271

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DEPT FOR AF/SPG  
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TAGS: [ASEC](#) [PREL](#) [SOCI](#) [SCUL](#) [PGOV](#) [KISL](#) [DA](#) [NO](#) [US](#) [SU](#)  
SUBJECT: SUDAN: Reaction to Danish Cartoon Relatively  
Mild

Ref: Khartoum 00264

¶1. Summary: Despite some violence in Darfur and a Friday demonstration in Khartoum, the situation here has remained relatively calm. The Norwegian Embassy received a threat, but is being well protected by Sudanese forces. There is some concern that Danish and Norwegian NGO's may have to halt operations, at least temporarily. End Summary.

Demonstrations Held in Khartoum on Feb. 3  
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¶2. Following the February 2 demonstration targeting the Danish Refugee Council in Nyala, the Embassy issued a warden notice advising American citizens in Sudan to exercise caution especially during the period after "Jama" prayers on February 3 (reftel). This warning was issued based on indications of the likelihood of demonstrations taking place in Khartoum after Friday Mosque services.

¶3. Early Friday morning, Sudanese riot police were pre-positioned throughout Khartoum -- at most diplomatic missions, including the U.S. Embassy, as well as at the United Nations and the offices of other prominent international organizations. Throughout the morning and mid-day, the streets of Khartoum remained relatively quiet. After prayers, large numbers of individuals coming from three Khartoum mosques converged on a city square located behind the Presidential Palace. The Danish cartoons were a topic of discussion at many local Mosques by government-selected religious speakers, who encouraged mosque attendees to participate in the scheduled demonstration. The crowd was estimated to number between 2,500 to 3,000. The crowd marched from the square to the nearby offices of the United Nations headquarters and European Union, where they held a peaceful rally against the cartoons. The protest included shouts of "Down with the U.S." The protestors also presented written complaints to representatives from the UN and EU. The Embassy received reports Presidential Advisors Dr. Ahmed Ali Al-Imam (religious affairs) and Dr. Ghazi Salahuddin (political affairs) addressed the crowd. There were no reports of violence.

More Details Emerge on Darfur Incident  
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¶4. On February 2, approximately 50 to 70 youth organized a demonstration at the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) and Norwegian Church Aid (NCA) compounds in Nyala, South Darfur. The crowd, primarily boys from a local private

school, threw stones at the DRC compound and destroyed the guard hut, then moved to the NCA compound, where they damaged an NCA vehicle, vandalized two motorbikes, and injured one staff member.

15. Demonstrations continued over the ensuing days, during which time protestors presented DRC with a letter requesting that DRC leave South Darfur, which was not of an aggressive or threatening tone. DRC complied with the request; however, it is not yet clear whether DRC's departure is a temporary security precaution or a permanent withdrawal from South Darfur. NCA continues to work in Nyala, but is keep a low profile and is remaining on high alert.

16. On February 4, a USAID partner reported hearing from the Sudanese government immigration department that the government was canceling the "stay" visas for all Danish and Norwegian NGOs staff. Local press reports that Dutch and French NGOs may face the same treatment, and that several NGOs might be expelled from Sudan for "poor performance."

#### Norwegian Embassy Protection, Press Release

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17. The Norwegian embassy received a threatening letter on February 3; police have provided ample protection. On February 6, local English press printed a press release from the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs highlighting the importance of respect for religion. The release referred to the publication of derogatory material as "unfortunate and deplorable," but also observed that freedom of expression is a constitutional

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right and a mainstay of Norwegian society. (Note: Denmark does not have a diplomatic mission in Sudan. End note.)

#### Press Reaction

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18. The Sudanese Arabic-language press carried reports of the demonstrations in Khartoum, which included burning of the Danish and Norwegian flags. One (Al-Hayat, Feb. 5) noted a demand from the Muslim Scholars Association for the expulsion of the ambassadors of Denmark, Norway, Spain, France, and Germany as well as a boycott of their goods. The new pro-Northern separatist daily Al Intibaha also reported the demonstration in Nyala ("Demonstrators in Darfur burn Vehicles of Norwegian and Swedish NGOs," Feb. 4). An editorial in the same edition - "We all will die for you, Prophet Mohammed!" - saw the insulting caricature as "a declaration of war on all Muslims," regardless of Danish government apologies.

19. Other editorials have supported a boycott of Danish goods, as in the pro-government dailies Sudan Vision (Feb. 5 and 6), Alwatan (Feb. 5), and Al-Rai Al-Aam ("The Freedom of Insult," Feb. 4). However, Sudan Vision also joined the other two (pro-Southern) English-language dailies in publishing, on Feb. 6, the text of a Norwegian official statement that, while characterizing the impact of the cartoons as "unfortunate and deplorable," maintained that freedom of expression also entails "tolerance" for different points of view.

#### Government Reaction

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110. According to the government Sudan News Agency, the National Congress Party renewed on February 2 a call for a boycott of Danish and Norwegian products and expressed hopes that government officials in the Muslim world would cut off diplomatic ties with any country that "humiliates

Islam or Muslims." Also on Febraury 3, Foreign Minister Lam Akol, in a BBC interview in London, condemned the publication of the cartoons, stating that such behavior is not helpful to the dialogue between civilizations and cultures.

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